to take up development of two new mining projects, one for deposit 10/11A and the other for deposit 11B. The iron ore available at Deposit 11-B is reportedly best suited for production of sponge iron in gas-based plants. There is a proposal to take up development of Deposit 11-B as a joint venture of NMDC with one of the private sector entrepreneurs who are operating or setting up a gas-based sponge iron plant in the country and who already have an assurance from NMDC to meet a substantial part of the plant's requirement of iron ore. However, a final decision in this regard has not yet been taken.

Modernisation of IISCO

4978. *SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA*: Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state what steps Government propose to take to modernise IISCO?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF STEEL (SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV): In terms of the Sick Industrial Companies (Special Provisions) Act, 1985 (as amended in February, 1994), Indian Iron and Steel Company Limited (IISCO) became a sick industrial company. Accordingly, a reference was made by the Board of Directors of IISCO to BIFR in June, 1994, as required under Section 15 of the Act, for determination of measures to be adopted with respect to the company.

The case has been registered with BIFR in terms of Section 15 of the Act. Sick companies registered with BIFR can take up revival/modernisation schemes only with the sanction/approval of BIFR.

Accident in Bhilai Steel Plant

4979. SYED SIBTEY RAZI: Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) whether large number of workers of the Bhilai Steel Plant were hospitalised due to leakage of poisonous gas from some furnace of plant in recent past;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether large number of workers have developed breathing trouble due to this incident;

(d) whether Government propose to have complete investigation of this incident in the interests of workers;

(e) whether Government also propose to take some measures ensuring these incidents are not repeated in future; and

(f) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF STEEL (SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV): (a) to (c) Yes, Sir. Twenty three persons were affected by leakage of Blast Furnace gas in Bhilai Steel Plant on 12.4.95. All the affected persons were rushed to the hospital immediately. Twelve persons were admitted while the rest were discharged after keeping them under observation. Of the twelve kept under observation/treatment, eight were released on 13.4.95, two on 14.4.95 and the remaining two on 17.4.95.

(d) Yes, Sir. SAIL has already constituted an Enquiry Committee under the Chairmanship of Director (Projects) to enquire into the causes to recommend remedial measures and to fix up the responsibility.

(e) and (f) In SAIL, safety aspects are taken care of at the corporate and also at plant level. It has a safety organisation at the corporate level to coordinate, monitor, promote and enhance the safety, occupational health and fire service